

## AMENDMENTS

### In the Claims

The following is a marked-up version of the claims with the language that is underlined ("\_\_\_\_") being added and the language that contains strikethrough ("—") being deleted:

1. (Currently Amended) A communication method ~~comprising the steps of:~~ comprising:  
receiving an instant messaging (IM) message from a sender to a recipient;  
waiting a predefined time interval for an input from the recipient, the input being responsive to the IM message; ~~and~~  
determining whether input from the recipient is received during the predetermined time interval; and  
in response to determining that no input from the recipient is received during the predetermined time interval, automatically replying to the IM message in the absence of an input from the recipient during the predefined time interval.
2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the step of replying to the~~ IM message ~~comprises the step of:~~ comprises:  
providing a message indicating the recipient's unavailability to engage in an IM chat session.
3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the step of replying to the~~ IM message ~~comprises the step of:~~ comprises:  
providing a message requesting the sender to wait for a predetermined time period.
4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the step of replying to the~~ IM message ~~comprises the step of:~~ comprises:

periodically providing messages, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the recipient's unavailability to engage in an IM chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

5. (Currently Amended) A communication method ~~comprising the steps of:~~  
comprising:

receiving an instant messaging (IM) message from a first sender to a recipient;  
determining whether input from the recipient is received during a predetermined time interval;

in response to determining that no input is received during the predetermined time interval determining whether the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with a second sender; and

in response to determining that the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with the second sender, automatically replying to the IM message in response to determining that the recipient is engaged in the IM chat session with the second sender.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further ~~comprising the step of:~~  
comprising: waiting a predefined time interval prior to replying to the IM message.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further ~~comprising the step of:~~  
comprising:  
indicating to the first sender that the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with the second sender.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further ~~comprising the step of:~~  
comprising: periodically providing messages to the first sender, the messages being periodically

provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the recipient's unavailability to engage in an IM chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval. interval.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of: comprising: indicating to the first sender that the recipient is unavailable to engage in an IM chat session with the first sender.

10. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium comprising:  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to receive an instant messaging (IM) message from a sender to a recipient;  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to wait a predefined time interval for an input from the recipient, the input being responsive to the IM message; ~~and~~  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to determine whether input from the recipient is received during the predetermined time interval; and  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device ~~to~~ to, in response to determining that no input from the recipient is received during the predetermined time interval, reply to the IM message in the absence of an input from the recipient during the predefined time interval.

11. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 10, further comprising:  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to provide a message indicating the recipient's unavailability to engage in an IM chat session.

12. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 10, further comprising:  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to provide a message requesting the sender to wait for a predetermined time period.

13. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 10, further comprising:  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to periodically provide messages, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the recipient's unavailability to engage in an IM chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

14. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium comprising:  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to receive an instant messaging (IM) message from a first sender to a recipient;

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to determine whether input from the recipient is received during a predetermined time interval;

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device ~~to~~ to, in response to determining that no input is received during the predetermined time interval, determine whether the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with second sender; and

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device ~~to~~ to, in response to determining that the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with the second sender, reply to the IM message in response to determining that the recipient is engaged in the IM chat session with the second sender.

15. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 14, further comprising:  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to wait a predefined time interval prior to replying to the IM message.

16. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 14, further comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to indicate that the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with the second sender.

17. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 14, further comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to periodically provide messages to the first sender, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the recipient's unavailability to engage in an IM chat session during the corresponding predefined time ~~interval~~; interval.

18. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 14, further comprising:  
computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to indicate that the recipient is unavailable to engage in an IM chat session with the first sender.

19. (Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:  
means for receiving an instant messaging (IM) message from a sender to a recipient;  
~~means for receiving an input from the recipient in response to the IM message;~~  
means for determining whether the recipient has provided an input during a predefined time interval; and  
means for, in response to determining that the recipient has not provided an input during the predetermined time interval, determining whether the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with another sender; and  
means ~~for~~ for, in response to determining that the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with another sender, replying to the IM ~~message in response to determining that the recipient has not provided an input during the predefined time interval;~~ message.

20. (Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:  
instant-messaging (IM) receive logic configured to receive an IM message from a sender to a recipient;

~~input-receive-logic configured to receive an input from the recipient in response to the IM message;~~

~~first determining logic configured to determine whether the recipient has provided an input during a predefined time interval; and~~

second determining logic configured to, in response to determining that the recipient has not provided an input during the predetermined time interval, determine whether the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with another sender;

~~reply logic configured to, in response to determining that the recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with another sender, reply to the IM message in response to determining that the recipient has not provided an input during the predefined time interval;~~ message.

21. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein the determining logic comprises:  
a timer configured to track elapsed time from a receiving of an IM message.

22. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein the reply logic comprises:  
message-generation logic configured to generate a message, the message being indicative of the recipient's unavailability to engage in an IM chat session.